

J. C. Worster

EXTRACTS FROM BOOKS,

AND OTHER

SMALL PIECES;

IN FAVOUR OF

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY,

AND THE

RIGHTS OF DISSENTERS.

Number I.

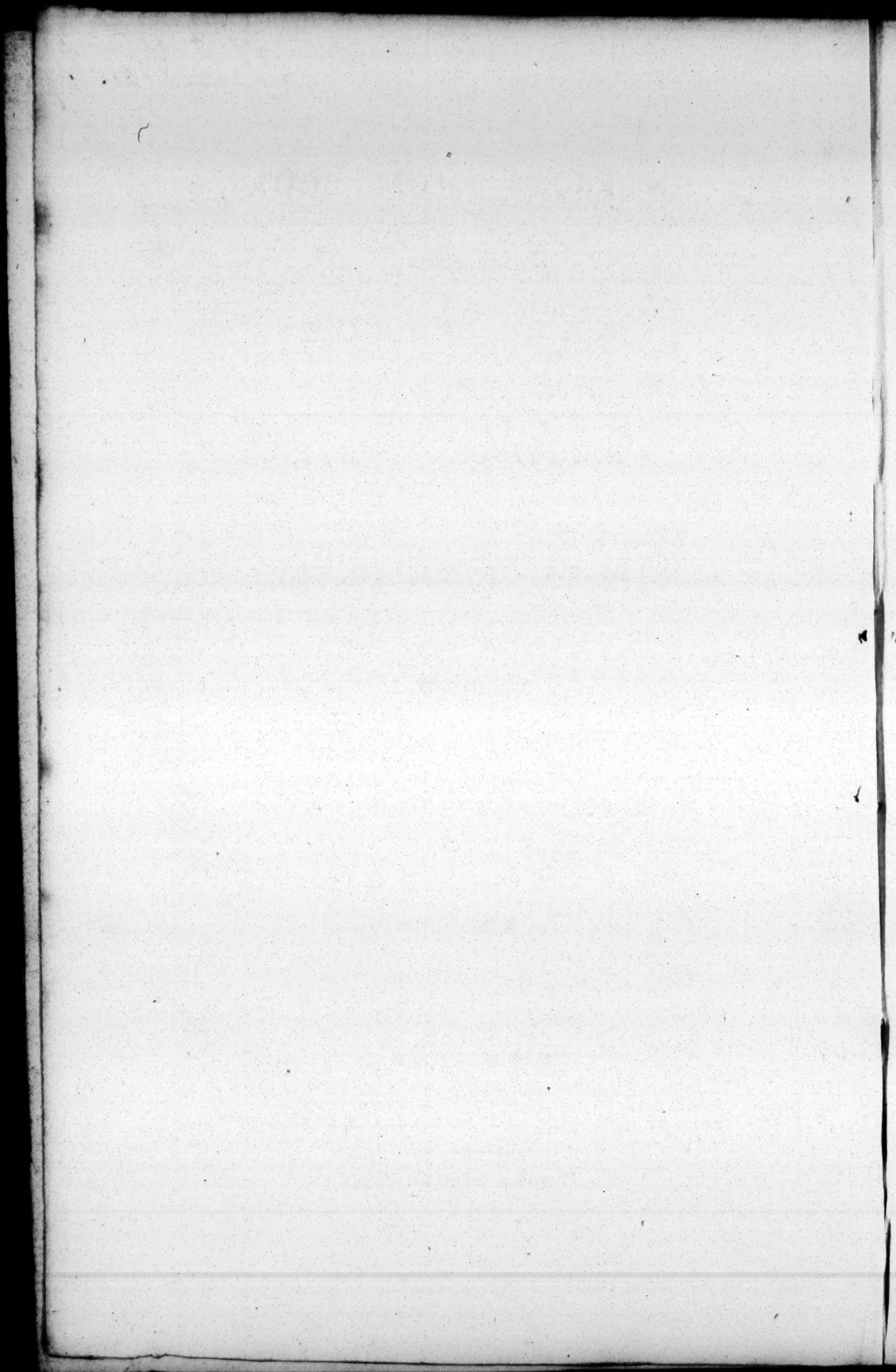
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T H E
P R E F A C E.

AS the dissenters are about to make a third application to parliament for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, and it is desirable that those in the country should concur with their brethren in London in the measures that may be taken for the purpose, it is thought proper, besides some larger tracts in favour of religious liberty and the rights of Dissenters, to reprint a few small pieces, such as are most likely to be overlooked and forgotten; and to give them as general a circulation as possible.

*By the good providence of God, the Dissenters have not of a long time been openly persecuted, and therefore many of them have not been led to give much attention to their principles, and want information on the subject; and without knowledge there can be no zeal but of a spurious and improper kind, such as deserves no other name than that of bigotry, the aid of which a good cause wishes to disclaim. That steady temperate zeal, which never loses sight of its object, and which alone is to be depended upon, exists only in the minds of
those*

those who understand their principles, and who have been thereby led to see, and to feel their value; and we are confident that the principles of religious liberty, which have long been violated in the case of the Dissenters in this country, only require attention both to excite the zeal, and engage the perseverance, of their professed friends, and even to enlighten the minds, and overcome the opposition, of their enemies. Bigotry is ever the offspring of ignorance, as a just zeal is of knowledge.

It is requested, therefore, that these pieces be not confined to the hands of Dissenters, but be recommended to members of the established church, and persons of every description. As Dissenters, we have no secrets. We take no measures in a private clandestine manner. Our principles invite investigation; and we require nothing of our countrymen but what they themselves shall be convinced is strictly our right, and what they cannot without injustice withhold from us.

A LETTER

J. C. Worsley

A
L E T T E R
TO THE
PRINTER OF THE MANCHESTER CHRONICLE.

SIR,

THE necessity for a renewed application to Parliament for a Repeal of the *Corporation* and *Test* Acts, is not so much known as its importance deserves. I have therefore sent you some observations relating to this subject, which I dare say will prove acceptable to such of your readers, as have not had an opportunity of seeing them before.

The case of the Protestant Dissenters, which accompanies this, will sufficiently explain for the present, what the restrictions are which these statutes impose. The objections to them, are partly of a *civil*, and partly of a *religious* nature.

It will not be contended, that any man should be regarded as a criminal, for adopting opinions which force themselves upon his conviction by the strength of their own evidence—and still less, for professing those opinions, and acting in conformity to them, if it be his indispensable duty to do so. Nor ought any member of society to suffer in his rights, his person, or his property, unless for some crime committed against his neighbour or the community.

But what man can avoid entertaining the religious opinions which he actually does entertain? They are, and must be, the inevitable result of the lights which his situation has afforded him—the necessary effect of the evidence that has occurred. He may profess, indeed, what he does not, and deny what he does believe—but his real *opinion*, his thoughts and sentiments, no kind or degree of external coercion can possibly controul.

Farther—on a subject of such moment as Religion, it is clearly the bounden duty of every man, to profess the opi-

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nions he really entertains. All truth is important—religious truth peculiarly so: and we are under an obligation in every case to profess what appears to us to be true, rather than what we deem otherwise.

Nor can the mere profession of religious opinions be of any detriment whatever to society. If they are true, they ought to be propagated, that they may be universally adopted—if false, that they may be confuted. Even the wildest of religious notions is of itself a matter of perfect indifference. When they break out into action, to the injury of others in their persons or their properties, it is then time enough for the magistrate to interfere within the bounds of his proper province, and punish the *misdeed*. With mere opinions he has nothing to do; those who profess them he may convert into hypocrites, but he can never make them unbelievers.

If it be no crime then to adopt opinions which we cannot avoid, and to obey the dictates of our conscience in a matter of the highest obligation, it cannot be just to punish us for so doing. And yet do the laws of this kingdom inflict a punishment on those, who in respect of the sacrament have the misfortune of being more conscientious than their neighbours. For what less than a punishment is it, to be debarred of the common privileges of our fellow citizens; to be shut out from almost every office of honour or emolument in the society to which we belong, and to be restrained from exercising even acts of charity to our neighbour, under fines and penalties more extensive and severe than are usually inflicted for atrocious crimes!

The CORPORATION and TEST ACTS therefore are *political* evils in the state: they abridge the *civil rights* of honest and worthy members of the community for no crime committed, and deprive society in many instances, of the advantage that would arise from the exertion of superior knowledge and abilities, because the possessor, happens unfortunately, to be a man of integrity!

But in a *religious* point of view these statutes are still more offensive. They are acts of national iniquity, and in direct contradiction to the letter and spirit of our saviour's command. "My kingdom is not of this world," (says our Lord) but our legislators are resolved that it shall

shall be, for an Englishman cannot now exercise the humble offices of an exciseman, or a tide-waiter, without performing the solemn service of the Lord's Supper as a qualification. — "My house shall be called a house of prayer," (said our Saviour, when he drove the money-changers out of the Temple) "but ye have made it a den of thieves." — What would he have said to the Corporation and Test Acts, had *they* been in existence, which convert the House of God into a qualification office?

When the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was first instituted, *our Saviour* expressly directed the purpose to which it should be applied — Do this in remembrance of me. *We* say, Do this that you may become a collector of taxes, a custom-house officer, or the alderman of a country corporation!

Surely this is not right. This cannot be such an application of a religious ordinance as a *Christian* (whether Churchman or Dissenter) can seriously countenance. This mixture of things sacred with prophane, of the lucre of this world, with the duties that respect another, cannot but be matter of offence to all, who consider the christian religion as an object of importance.

The Corporation and Test acts, therefore, are grievances to conscientious churchmen as well as dissenters. The scruples or omissions of the former equally occasion an abridgement of the civil rights, or an infliction of civil penalties, as of the latter; and it is the interest and the *duty* of both, therefore, to join in getting rid of the burthen.

It is worth observing also, that the honours and emoluments of the church, will remain in as full force as at present, though the statutes in question be repealed. The establishment will be in no danger from the success of the application. It existed before these statutes were enacted, and will continue to exist in as full vigour, should the legislature think fit to annul them.

Moreover, it is somewhat hard, that *Englishmen* should be subjected to the hardship of a test, from which the good sense of the *Irish* legislature has long ago set that country free — And it is singularly unfair, that this test should operate in *Scotland*, where a church of Englandman is a dissenter from the established religion.

If these laws be *right*, the intended application of the dissenters ought to be strenuously opposed. But if they be *wrong*—if they be abhorrent from the civil rights of mankind, and directly repugnant to the precepts of our holy religion—it is the *duty* of every friend to his country, and still more of every CHRISTIAN, to join in the attempt of procuring their repeal.

The dissenters in particular ought to make this a common cause. For these statutes, not originally intended against them, have served the purposes of political bigotry, and been converted into engines of oppression against that class of the community, who have in this very particular deserved best of their country.

The numerous and respectable society of dissenters in and about London who have joined on this occasion, have entered into a resolution to shew a marked attention to those members of parliament, who shall support the cause of religion and liberty, by voting for the repeal of these obnoxious statutes. The provincial dissenters throughout the kingdom are called upon to join them in this measure, by entering into similar resolutions, and instructing their respective members. This is no party business—thank God, men of all political descriptions have seen its propriety, and joined in its support. The members who divided in favour of Mr. Beaufoy's motion, consisted of strenuous advocates for the present administration, as well as of warm friends to the present opposition. But with administration or opposition in this question, the dissenters have nothing to do. Let them be firm to the cause in which their rights are so much involved, and its justice must finally procure its success.

Why would not a meeting of the dissenters of this town and neighbourhood be called, to co-operate with their brethren in London at this important crisis? By some few among the numerous and respectable inhabitants of Manchester of that description, this might easily and effectually be accomplished—nor is there any doubt but their endeavours will be seconded by every liberal and enlightened churchman, whose civil and religious rights must of necessity be extended and confirmed, if the proposed application should succeed.

A DISSENTER.

*The Case of the Protestant Dissenters, in Relation to
the Laws by which the Sacramental Test is imposed.*

(Referred to in the preceding Letter.)

Corporation Act. 13 Car. II. Sef. 2. c. 1. **I**N the year 1661 a statute was made, intituled, *An Act for the well-governing and regulating of Corporations.* This statute, after empowering the king to appoint commissioners for removing and displacing any persons who, upon the 24th day of December, 1661, should be mayors, aldermen, recorders, bailiffs, town-clerks, common-councilmen, and other persons then bearing any office of magistracy, or places, or trusts, or other employments relating to the government of cities, corporations, and boroughs, and cinque-ports, and their members, and other port-towns;—provides and enacts, “That from and after the expiration
“of the said commissions*, no person shall for ever here-
“after be placed, elected, or chosen in or to any the offices
“or places aforesaid that shall not have, within one year
“next before such election or choice, taken the sacrament
“of the Lord’s Supper, according to the rites of the church
“of England;—and in default hereof, every such placing,
“election, and choice, is hereby enacted and declared to
“be void.”

By statute 5 Geo. I. c. 6. § 3, an officer offending against the corporation act is rendered irremovable, unless

* These commissions expired on the 25th of March, 1663; and more extraordinary commissions, it is probable, were never issued. The powers given to the commissioners were “new, and unknown to the constitution, which nothing but the most urgent necessity, real or imaginary, could have justified: *for they were impowered, among other things, at their will and pleasure, to remove all corporation officers, if they should deem it expedient for the public safety, and at their will and pleasure to fill up all vacancies occasioned by such removals or otherwise.*” See Sir Michael Foster’s argument in the Court of the Judges Delegates, in the case of Allen Evans, Esquire, against the Chamberlain of London, in the Appendix to Dr. Furneaux’s Letters to Sir William Blackstone, No. 1.

a prosecution be commenced against him, within six months after his election.

Test Act. In the year 1672 a statute was made, intituled, *An Act for preventing Dangers which*
25 Car. II. c. 2. § 2. 5. may happen from Popish Recusants, by which it is, among other things, enacted, "That every person
 "that shall be admitted, entered, placed, or taken into any
 "office, civil or military; or shall receive any pay, salary,
 "fee, or wages, by reason of any patent or grant of his
 "Majesty; or shall have command or place of trust from
 "or under his Majesty, his heirs or successors, or by his or
 "their authority, or by authority derived from him or them
 "within this realm of England, dominion of Wales, or
 "town of Berwick upon Tweed; or in his Majesty's
 "navy; or in the several islands of Jersey and Guernsey;
 "or that shall be admitted into any service or employment
 "in his Majesty's household or family; shall receive the
 "sacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the usage
 "of the church of England, *within three months* after his
 "admittance in, or receiving his said authority and em-
 "ployment, in some public church, upon some Lord's
 "day immediately after divine service and sermon:—And
Penalty. "that every person that shall neglect or refuse to
 "take the sacrament as aforesaid, and yet, after
 "such neglect or refusal, shall execute any of the said offices
 "or employments, and being thereupon lawfully con-
 "victed, *shall be disabled to sue or use any action, bill, plaint,*
 "*or information, in course of law, or to prosecute any suit in*
 "*any court of equity; or TO BE GUARDIAN OF ANY*
 "*CHILD; or executor or administrator of any person; or*
 "*capable of any legacy or deed of gift; or to bear any office;*
 "*and shall forfeit the sum of five hundred pounds, to be re-*
 "*covered by him or them that shall sue for the same."*

By statute 9 Geo. II. c. 26. § 4, the time within which persons being beyond the seas are required to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the usage of the church of England, in pursuance of the last-mentioned act, is enlarged to *six calendar months* after their return to, or arrival in England: And by statute 16 Geo. II. c. 30. § 3, the time for all persons in office to receive the sacra-
 ment

ment of the Lord's Supper, according to the usage of the church of England, is enlarged to *six months* after their admittance in, or receiving their authority or employment.

The protestant dissenters have long felt themselves aggrieved by the requisition of the sacramental test, as a qualification for admission to civil and military offices; and from this grievance they humbly hope to be relieved, for the following reasons:

I. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper, having been solemnly appointed by our Blessed Saviour only for the remembrance of his death, ought not to be applied to civil purposes.

II. Every man hath an unalienable right, as it is now generally acknowledged, to judge for himself in matters of religion; and as the dissenters have always proved themselves well affected to the present government, and have been ever ready to take the oaths required by law, it is unjust and oppressive to deprive them of civil rights, only on account of their scruples to receive the sacrament as a civil test.

III. The receiving of the Lord's Supper occasionally, according to the usage of the church of England, is no proof of an approbation of the whole constitution and frame of that church, since many christians conform in this particular, who do not approve of other parts of the establishment; and other christians, as well as unbelievers, may comply with this ceremony, merely for interested or ambitious purposes. Such a test, therefore, can be no real security to the church of England.

IV. The repeal of the laws, by which the sacramental test is imposed, would not injure the established church. That church was established long before the imposition of this test, and would continue to be established, although it should be removed. By such repeal the doctrine, discipline, privileges, and revenues of the church would not be in the least affected: and many serious clergymen would find, in the alteration, ease to their consciences, and safety from vexatious prosecutions; for although the church of England forbids notorious blasphemers of God, slanderers of his word, adulterers, fornicators, drunkards, and other offenders, to come to the holy table, yet if the minister

should refuse, upon requisition, to admit such persons to the sacrament, to qualify them for offices, he may be harrassed by expensive civil prosecutions.

V. In no other country is the sacramental test required as a qualification for civil employments; and it must be particularly remarked, that episcopalians in North Britain, who are dissenters from the church established there, are not liable to any incapacities in consequence of not qualifying themselves by receiving the sacrament according to the usage of that church, but have free admission to all the offices in Scotland, upon taking the usual oaths: And yet in England the natives of Scotland (among whom episcopalian dissenters are so liberally treated) cannot be members of the privy council, or hold any commission in the army or navy of Great-Britain, to the support of which they contribute their proportion, without receiving the sacrament according to the rites of a church to which they do not belong. No history, ancient or modern, affords such an instance of the exclusion of a free people from offices which may so properly be called *THEIR OWN*.

VI. In the year 1779 an act was passed in Ireland, for the relief of his Majesty's faithful subjects the protestant dissenters of that kingdom, by which it is enacted, "That
 "all and every person and persons, being protestants, shall
 "and may have, hold, and enjoy any office or place, civil
 "or military, and receive any pay, salary, fee, or wages
 "belonging to or by reason of such office or place, notwithstanding he shall not receive, or have received the
 "sacrament of the Lord's Supper,—without incurring any
 "penalties—for or in respect of his neglect of receiving the
 "same." This measure was designed to give additional security to the church of Ireland, by conciliating the protestant dissenters of that country: and it is apprehended that it had the desired effect. The protestant dissenters in England, therefore, cannot but consider it as ungenerous and unjust to treat them as enemies to the establishment here, when the friendship of their brethren has been acknowledged, and their assistance courted, by the establishment in the sister-kingdom.

VII. The absurdity of the test laws, as they now stand, is most glaring; for though a dissenter may be a legislator in
 either

either house of parliament, without receiving the sacrament according to the rites of the church of England, yet he cannot legally without it have any share in the direction of the Bank of England, the East-India, Russia, or South-Sea Companies; or be a customhouse officer or an excise-man; or hold the meanest corporation office in any city or borough. He may not, in some places, even assist in the management of hospitals or alms-houses, which he or his ancestors have endowed.

VIII. The large and indefinite terms, in which the test act is expressed, may give occasion to the grossest abuses, and render it an instrument of the most grievous persecution and oppression. If the act should be rigorously enforced, many protestant dissenters might be compelled to violate their consciences, or to abandon even the ordinary occupations by which they now support themselves and their families. The act is not confined merely to *public** employments. It extends not only to persons who bear offices civil and military, but to those who have command or place of trust under his Majesty, *or by authority derived from him*. Those who scruple to receive the sacrament, according to the rites of the church of England, are not only prohibited from partaking of the bounty of the King, but from *receiving* any pay, salary, fee, or wages, by grant from the crown, in return for the most meritorious services! It has been questioned in a court of justice, whether censors†, appointed by the college of physicians, were not obliged to qualify; and the point seems to be still undetermined. It was not settled till the reign of his late Majesty, that the common burgesses and freemen‡ of a corporation, who do not exercise any office relating to the government thereof, were exempted from this act. In the year 1702 the House of Lords§ attempted, but in

* See Lords Journals, vol. XII. p. 567.

† Carthew's Reports, p. 478.—Modern Reports, vol. V. p. 431.

‡ Strange's Reports, vol. II. p. 828.

§ In the debate between the two Houses relating to the bill, the Lords said, "That the disagreeing to the clause relating to work-houses, where the poor were employed and relieved, seems very hard, since it could never be conceived, that the distribution of *some Presbyterian bread to the poor, and Dissenting water-gruel to the sick*, could ever bring

vain, to procure, in the bill against occasional conformity, the insertion of a clause to exempt *free and voluntary* hospitals, though not endowed, out of the test act. And "so low have these holy things been prostituted," that, Mr. Locke tells us*, "Men have been driven to take the sacrament to obtain licences to sell ale."

IX. It is manifestly unjust, that the rights of innocent persons should be destroyed or affected by the criminal conduct or neglect of others; yet no man (if the objection be taken at the proper time†) can recover a debt in an inferior court, over which an unqualified corporator presides: nor can the election of a corporate officer, before magistrates who have neglected to qualify, be supported. It is not less unjust that punishment should be inflicted for crimes which the offender could not possibly know he was in a capacity to commit; yet, upon succeeding to an office of inheritance (as no entry is necessary) a person may suffer in consequence of the lapse of the six months before he has even notice of his right having accrued.

X. The penalty inflicted by the test act is enormous, and humility cannot contemplate it without horror. The party is not only deprived of the office, but he is incapacitated to sue in any court of law or equity; to be guardian of any child; to be executor or administrator of any person; to take any legacy or deed of gift; or to bear any office; and is besides subjected to forfeit five hundred pounds to any person who shall sue for the same:

bring any prejudice to the church of England; especially by such as having no authority in the government, or profit by the administration of such charities, gave them indifferently to those of all persuasions." They farther said, "That the clause concerning those societies that are engaged in taking care of the poor—has no relation to *endowed* hospitals which are under peculiar statutes, and to which none of these people have any access, that the law has taken care of these, and secured them; and that this clause relates only to *free and voluntary* societies for such charities, which the Lords do not think fit to put any restraints upon, or to bar any from coming into them." Chandler's Debates, vol. III. p. 230. 242.

* In his second letter concerning toleration, last edition of his works, vol. II. p. 360.—and see his third letter, p. 531.—This circumstance was also mentioned by Sir Henry Capell, in the House of Commons. Grey's Debates, vol. IX. p. 111.

† See 2 Mod. 193, 194.—2 Lev. 184. 242.—Lord Raym. 885.

And

And as prosecutions under this act are not limited in respect of time, its operation having been only suspended occasionally during certain intervals by acts of indemnity, no person, *whether conformist or non-conformist*, who has been in office, and has omitted, through illness or mere inadvertence, to qualify according to law, can ever afterwards be safe.

XI. The situation of foreign countries with regard to Britain affords strong arguments for the repeal of these oppressive laws. To the intolerance of our neighbours in former times, we owe the introduction or perfection of some of our most important manufactures ; among others, those of wool and silk : and other nations may, in like manner, profit by the illiberality of this country. The United States of America, in addition to the ease with which they permit foreigners to become naturalized, make no distinctions as to religious sects in relation to their public offices. Other countries are gradually improving in their policy, in this particular. By the late commercial treaty with France, assented to by the same legislature to which the protestant dissenters now apply, it is provided, " That in matters of religion the subjects of the two crowns shall enjoy perfect liberty ;" and by a late edict registered in that kingdom great indulgences are granted to non-catholics ; so that to many protestant dissenters it may be of little importance, as far as religion is concerned, in which of the two countries they and their families shall reside. Moreover in France, Germany, Prussia, Russia, Holland, Poland, and other countries, many persons dissenting from their respective establishments have been employed in the highest offices, who, by the most signal services, have manifested this important truth, **THAT A DISSENTER FROM THE ESTABLISHED RELIGION OF A COUNTRY MAY BE A TRUE FRIEND TO ITS GENERAL INTERESTS AND PROSPERITY.**

For these and other reasons, the dissenters are induced to renew their application to parliament for relief, humbly apprehending that their request will appear to be founded in justice, and that a compliance with it will redound to the honour of religion ; will contribute to the welfare and security of the nation ; will be honourable to the king, as
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the common father of his people, and no way injurious to any one subject in his majesty's dominions. Arguments so weighty and cogent as those which are now offered cannot fail, they trust, in conjunction with the enlarged and liberal spirit of the times, to procure from the legislature the repeal of statutes, which cannot be considered as in any degree grounded on public necessity, or public advantage.

The following protests will shew the light in which the subject was considered at the time of its agitation a century ago.

Die Jovis, 21^o Martii, 1688.

THE House having been in consideration of the bill for abrogating the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and establishing others in their place,

A clause for repealing so much of the Test Act as concerns the receiving the sacrament was read.

And the question being put, whether to agree to the said clause?

It was resolved in the negative.

Leave was given by the House to such Lords as will, to enter their dissents, and accordingly these Lords following, do enter their dissents, for the reasons following:

1st. Because a hearty union amongst protestants is a greater security to the church and state than any test that can be invented.

2dly. Because this obligation to receive the sacrament is a test on protestants rather than on the papists.

3dly. Because so long as it is continued, there cannot be that hearty and thorough union amongst protestants as has always been wished, and is at this time indispensibly necessary.

4thly. Because a greater caution ought not to be required from such as are admitted into offices, than from the members

members of the two houses of parliament, who are not obliged to receive the sacrament to enable them to sit in either house.

NORTH AND GREY,	DELAMER,	STAMFORD,
CHESTERFIELD,	GREY,	P. WHARTON.
J. LOVELACE,	VAUGHAN,	

Die Sabbati, 23^o Martii, 1688.

Hodie 3a vice lecta est billa, An act for the abrogating of the oaths of supremacy allegiance, and appointing other oaths.

A rider (in parchment) providing, that no officer shall incur the penalties of the test-act, in case he shall receive the sacrament in any protestant congregation within a year before or after his admission, was offered and read.

And the question being put, whether this rider shall be made part of the bill?

It was resolved in the negative.

Leave was given to such lords as will, to enter their dissents, and these lords do enter their dissents in the reasons following:

1st. Because it gives great part of the protestant free men of England reason to complain of inequality and hard usage, when they are excluded from public employments by a law, and also because it deprives the king and kingdom of divers men fit and capable to serve the public in several stations, and that for a mere scruple of conscience, which can by no means render them suspected, much less disaffected, to the government.

2dly. Because his majesty, as the common and indulgent father of his people, having expressed an earnest desire of liberty for tender consciences to his protestant subjects; and my lords, the bishops having, divers of them, on several occasions professed an inclination, and owned the reasonableness of such a christian temper; we apprehend, it will raise suspicions in men's minds of something different from the case of religion or the public, or a design to heal our breaches, when they find, that by confining secular employments to ecclesiastical conformity, those are shut out from civil affairs, whose doctrine and worship may be tolerated

rated by authority of parliament, there being a bill before us, by order of the house, to that purpose; especially when, without this exclusive rigour, the church is secured in all her privileges and preferments, nobody being hereby let into them who is not strictly conformable.

3rdly. Because to set marks of distinction and humiliation on any sort of men who have not rendered themselves justly suspected to the government, as it is at all times to be avoided by the makers of just and equitable laws, so may it be particularly of ill effect to the reformed interest at home and abroad, in this present conjuncture, which stands in need of the united hands and hearts of all protestants, against the open attempts and secret endeavours of a restless party, and a potent neighbour, who is more zealous than Rome itself to plant popery in these kingdoms, and labours, with his utmost force, to settle his tyranny upon the ruins of the reformation all through Europe.

4thly. Because it turns the edge of a law (we know not by what fate) upon protestants and friends to the government, which was intended against papists, to exclude them from places of trust, as men avowedly dangerous to our religion and government; and thus the taking the sacrament, which was enjoined only as a means to discover papists, is now made a distinguishing duty amongst protestant dissenters, to weaken the whole, by casting off a part of them.

5thly. Because mysteries of religion and divine worship are of divine original, and of a nature so wholly distant from the secular affairs of public society, that they cannot be applied to those ends; and therefore the church, by the law of the gospel, as well as common prudence, ought to take care not to offend either tender consciences within itself, or give offence to those without, by mixing their sacred mysteries with secular interests.

6thly. Because we cannot see how it can consist with the law of God, common equity, or the right of any free-born subject, that any one should be punished without a crime: if it be a crime not to take the sacrament according to the usage of the church of England, every one ought to be punished for it, which nobody affirms: if it be no crime, those who are capable, and judged fit for employments by
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the king, ought to be punished with a law of exclusion, for not doing that which is no crime to forbear: if it be urged still, as an effectual test to discover and keep out papists, the taking the sacrament in those protestants congregations, where they are members and known, will be at least as effectual to that purpose.

OXFORD,		MORDAUNT,		J. LOVELACE,
R. MONTAGUE,		P. WHARTON,		W. PAGET.

The Speech of Mons. Rabaud de Sainte Etienne,
A PROTESTANT MINISTER,
In the National Assembly of France, on Thursday, the
twenty-seventh of August, 1789.

The Question was: "*Whether any person ought either to be molested
" on account of his religious opinions, or debarred from his adherence
" to that form of worship of which he most approves?"*"

I RISE, as the delegate of a numerous and respectable body of constituents. The bailiwick which I have the honour to represent contains five hundred thousand inhabitants, amongst whom one hundred and twenty thousand are protestants; and, in this multitude I have the pleasure to be included. They have instructed me to ask for an impartial code; and, upon this occasion, I am confident that I can unanswerably establish the justice and the propriety of their request. The rights which I claim, and in the support of which I am, now, ready to contend, belong equally to you and to ourselves. They are not merely the rights of the French: They are the rights of all mankind! He who attacks the freedom of his fellow-creatures is only fit to live in slavery! Freedom is a privilege, at once sacred and inviolable, which men bring with them into the world, and which is designed to influence the whole of their opinions. The freedom of thought is paramount to all power whatsoever; and its sanctuary is—the heart!—To
fetter

fetter the conscience is injustice! to ensnare or to rebel against it, is an act of sacrilege: but, to torture it by the attempt to force its feelings from their propriety, is horrible intolerance; it is the most abandoned violation of all the maxims of morality and religion! Error, far from being *guilt*, is *truth* in the idea of the person by whom it has been embraced. Where is the man who can either presume to assert that *his* reasoning and consequent procedures are unexceptionable, or venture positively to decide against the *supposed* mistaken sentiments and conduct of his neighbour? A form of worship is a tenet: a tenet depends upon opinion: and opinion and liberty are inseparable. To endeavour to compel one person to receive a tenet different from that which may have been entertained by another, is a direct attack against liberty! it is intolerant; and, of course, unjust: it is that kind of persecution which, whilst it insults a manly and independent style of thinking, abets and cherishes hypocrisy!

The last edict which *professes* to be in favour of those who are not within the pale of the *catholic* church, grants to them only such indulgences *as it was impossible to have refused*. This is, word for word, the language of the king, who, in his edict, uses these terms: "*I speak of the right of legalising their marriages and their baptisms, and of the permission to bury their dead.*" O humiliating concessions! O degraded Frenchmen! And, is it in *this* enlightened country, and during the eighteenth century, that the nation remains divided into two classes, one of which has long groaned under proscriptions shocking in the extreme? I will speak out at once, and tell *this* assembly, that the *pretended* gift of the last year was received with shame and with concern. We scorn to prove guilty of hypocrisy: at least, we will not degrade ourselves into the objects of your disdain; but, if it be our hard fate still to experience your jealousy and your persecution, we will maintain un sullied the true principle of French honour, one great criterion of which is a contempt for that dissimulation which would debase the intention of the legislature. We do not solicit *favours*: we ask only for *justice*; and, doubtless, that *impartial* liberty which reigns in *this* assembly will never suffer justice to be dispensed by *partial* distributions.

tributions. The protestants are, *all*, for their country; and, yet, this country has not granted to *them* any benefits: *they* have no motive to excite their emulation; nor are they permitted to enjoy the rewards of either their civil or military virtues. It is not for toleration that I plead. As to *intolerance*, that *savage* word, I hope that it is expunged, for ever, from our annals. Toleration suggests the idea of pity, which degrades the dignity of man; but, liberty ought to be the same in favour of all the world. I demand liberty for those proscribed people; for those wretched wanderers from place to place, over the whole surface of the globe; for those numerous victims to humiliation: I mean the persecuted Jews.

It may, perhaps, be answered, that the states which surround you are an exception to those who do not profess the religion of the majority. Natives of France! *you* were made, not to *receive*, but, to *afford* examples. And, yet, if you delight in imitation, copy the Americans!—*They* have excepted no person whatsoever. The follower of that kind of religion which inculcates the true principles of liberty, is intitled to enjoy all the sacred privileges which are attached to human nature.

But, I return to my principles, or, rather, to your own, when I declare that *all men are born and remain free*. Is not *this* the proper consecration of the liberty of the human race? Every exclusive privilege in matters of religion destroys your principles. *Your* law is only the law which the strongest arm maintains: and, could I not, for the purposes of justifying an act of disodience, avail myself, against your own authority, of those very principles which have so strongly marked the recent regulation of your conduct?

A long and bloody epoch has made us learn experience. Is it not, therefore, full time totally to demolish those abominable barriers which separate man from man; which disunite the French from the French?

My country is *free*! let her discover that she merits this felicity by equally dividing her privileges among all her children! Until the constitution shall have established that equality which I demand, I vote entirely in favour of the proposition of Monsieur de Castellane:—*That no person*

should be either molested on account of his religious opinions, or debarred from an adherence to that form of worship of which he most approves.

*Extract from the GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE, for
February, 1789.*

MR. URBAN,

AS I understand it is probable that a renewal of the application of the Dissenters to Parliament, for relief from the operation of the Test and Corporation Acts, will shortly take place, I beg to be indulged with the insertion in your esteemed miscellany of some remarks respecting the grounds and tendency of such an application, which I am induced to make, solely with the intention of removing unjust prejudices, and of contributing to the diffusion of such sentiments as, in my opinion, deserve the concurrence of every liberal and enlightened mind.

It is obviously so just and reasonable a thing, that every member of a community, who contributes his equal proportion to its support, and is equally interested in its prosperity, should be entitled to a full participation in all its essential privileges and advantages, that it may be assumed as a general maxim, which can be set aside only in consequence of some manifest cause of particular distrust or disability. Now, such causes can only in justice have a reference to the ends and purposes for which the society was instituted; and it is upon this ground alone, that every alleged reason for the exclusion of individuals from any of its benefits is to be tried. That speculative opinions in religion are not of themselves sufficient causes for civil disabilities, seems now to be admitted by all who pretend to the smallest degree of liberality. Experience has sufficiently shewn, both that differences in religious systems are unavoidable, and that such differences have no influence on the general tenor of human affairs. They are
not

not cognizable by human courts, which have no means, as such, of deciding them, and have no other concern with men's opinions, than as they display themselves in their actions. Farther, the *moral principles*, which alone can affect the *conduct* of mankind, are the same among all Christian sects. None, therefore, I suppose, will now chuse to assert, that the Protestant Dissenter is excluded from all posts both of trust and profit, and made a sort of alien in his own country, merely because he does not admit all the thirty-nine articles of the English church. What then are the real grounds on which this apparent deviation from natural equity and justice is maintained? The arguments used for this purpose may be reduced under two general heads.

I. The opposer of the Dissenters' claims lays it down as an uncontrovertible principle, that *some* religious establishment is necessary to the support of every government; and that, when such establishment has been fixed, if it be found to answer its purpose, it ought to be maintained. This maintenance must consist, on one part, of a *public support* given to the ministers of the established church; and, on the other, of some *preference* in honour and emolument to its members; which preference, of course, implies a proportional debasement and incapacitation of all others. But of the several assertions contained in this chain of reasoning, some, at least, may fairly be disputed. If it be allowed, that the influence of religion upon morals is such, that every government ought to provide for its public support and propagation, it will not follow, that an *uniformity of mode* is necessary to secure its good effects; and an establishment for the general purposes of religious worship and instruction may be conceived, without a limitation to the doctrine and discipline of a peculiar church. Whatever advantages might be imagined in theory to arise from the commanding dignity of an uniform public faith, secured from all insult or rivalry, and sustained by, and in its turn sustaining, the civil government of a country, experience has but too plainly proved, that these benefits are more specious than real; that the genuine spirit of religion has been constantly debased by the mixture of civil policy, as the latter has been injured by making it subser-

vient to the narrow views of a religious sect; and that without absolutely suppressing the exercise of private judgment, and the unalienable rights of conscience, such a quiet uniformity cannot be obtained. Can any member of the Church of England suppose, that, while this is a free country, there will cease to be Dissenters, or that the Dissenters, with the right of speaking and publishing, will ever cease to maintain their own opinions, and impugn those of their adversaries? In fact, it is not to be wondered at, that *all* religious establishments have been averse to toleration, since a liberal toleration is directly opposite to the spirit and intention of a narrow establishment.

Were it granted, however, that the establishment even of Christianity itself is not sufficient, without also establishing the particular mode in which it is to be taught as a national religion; still it does not follow, that this is to be maintained by excluding all persons of other persuasions from every place of public trust. Is it not sufficient for every purpose of utility, that a fund be raised upon the general body for providing for the support of the favoured system, so that it shall not sink through the poverty or indifference of its own members? Why should those who give the most unequivocal proofs of their regard for religion, by incurring an additional expence in supporting its exercise after the manner which their conscience leads them to prefer, be stigmatized as suspected men, unworthy of all public confidence?

It will be said, that, without any reflection on their moral and religious character, they may be reasonably suspected as enemies to an establishment with which they do not comply, and as naturally wishing its subversion, to make room for their own; and therefore, that this incapacitation is only a justifiable measure of self-defence. But if the establishment really answers the good purposes for which it was designed, why should it be supposed that a friend to religion in general, though personally separating from it, should wish its overthrow; or, indeed, that any man of common sense should attempt to subvert it, while supported by a majority of ten to one above all the other sects united? The church can never be in danger till the opinions of a large proportion of the people
come

come to be adverse to its principles of administration. But this is a danger which no jealous and illiberal policy can prevent—a danger which *ought* to be felt in such circumstances; for it would be a solecism in a state, pretending to be free, to remain subjected to any institution whatever, which no longer possessed the approbation of a majority. Meantime, let those who are so tremblingly alive to every thing which seems to endanger their interests, console themselves with the reflection, that there is not a great family in England uninterested in preserving all the possessions and privileges of the church. For, as the Bishop of Landaff, in his *Letter to the Archbishop*, sagaciously remarks, “the property of the church is the real property of those who at present possess it, but it may be esteemed the reversionary property of every family in the kingdom.” Such a barrier may suffice against more dangerous foes than the Dissenters. Surely, then, the present defence of the church does not require the aid of the *mean and hazardous policy of injustice*.

II. As a farther reason for the disabilities under which Dissenters labour, a supposed disaffection to the *civil constitution* of this country has been alledged. It is, however, a fact of such notoriety, that the body of Dissenters in England, as well as the Presbyterians in Scotland and Ireland, have ever been constant and zealous supporters of the constitution of these kingdoms, as settled at the glorious Revolution, that to affect a suspicion of their designs at present, is nothing less than a most unwarranted insult. If the essence of our constitution be supposed to consist in its being a *monarchy*, were not, during the two last reigns, the Dissenters the most trusted friends and strenuous supporters of the *crown*? and why should they now be changed? Their disaffection can by no other argument be rendered probable, than by assuming as a principle, that the ecclesiastical is so interwoven with the civil constitution of this country, that they who are not friends to the one, must be enemies to the other. And writers have gone so far as to assert the *essential* connection between these two facts, without being startled by the glaring instance to the contrary in Scotland, which, even if it were single, would be sufficient entirely to overthrow the silly adage of “no bishop, no king.”

Were

Were the Dissenters seriously supposed to be disaffected to the state on account of its connection with a church which they disapprove, true policy, as well as justice, would dictate to lessen that disaffection, by removing every thing in the connection which unnecessarily aggrieves them. That kind of persecution which effectually quashes and extinguishes a sect, cannot be practised in this age and country. Every inferior kind irritates more than it weakens, and makes those *enemies*, who would be only *non-conformists*. The treatment of the Roman Catholics in Ireland will afford sufficient examples of this truth.

But, it is asked, what is to be the end of the Dissenters' requisitions? what will content them? Has not a celebrated writer among them avowed, from the press, a great deal more than they thought proper, as petitioners, to bring forwards! It is certainly true, that the writer above alluded to, whose philosophical mind comprehended the full consequences of leading principles, and whose open and ingenuous disposition led him to disdain all prudential disguise, has sufficiently shewn, that the Dissenters will eventually be satisfied with nothing less than complete justice — than their perfect restoration to those rights of citizens, of which they have been arbitrarily deprived. In this consequence, however, there is nothing at which a friend to genuine religion and liberty need be alarmed. Let a number of capable and conscientious men be added to our magistrates and public officers; let temptations no more be offered to induce persons to comply with rites, purely religious, for the sake of worldly advantages; but let every man, in every station, worship God in the way his reason dictates; let mankind no longer derive their civil distinctions from the religious sects under which they range themselves, but from their characters as men and citizens. What is there in all this but a consummation devoutly to be wished for!

To conclude with reverting to the maxim with which I set out — the fundamental rights and privileges of regular and peaceable members of the community ought not to be annulled for the sake of security against distant and fancied dangers, affecting institutions by no means essential to the good of the whole. The statesman who is not sufficiently enlightened,

enlightened, and the ecclesiastic who is not sufficiently disinterested, to admit and apply this principle will never be numbered among the real friends of mankind.

Your's, &c.

CIVICUS.

From the GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE for 1732.

Extract from a pamphlet of that year.

RELIGION and government are so absolutely distinct, that what *supports* the one, absolutely *destroys* the other. By *power* government subsists, but religion is subverted. *Good governments* can only be supported by *good laws*; *true religion* can only be preserved by making no laws about it: For, though the established doctrine *happen* to be *true*, and the *commands reasonable*, yet if a man *believes* the one and *obeys* the other, because enjoined by the *civil power*, his belief is in *men*, not in *God*, and his obedience is *civil*, not *religious*.

Hence it follows, That not only *no-laws with penalties* should be made about matters *merely religious*; but that *acts* to disqualify any men, particularly *protestant dissenters*, from sharing the *civil rights*, (not the *favours* of the government) are absolutely *unreasonable*; because *dissenters* have no *principles* or *practices* against a legal *free* government. Hence it is reasonable that the *test act*, as it regards the *dissenters* should be repealed; for being *equally* good subjects with others, they should be equally well treated with others.

It is said, that the *repeal* of the *test act* is *inconsistent* with the *preservation* of the *church*. This is equally calculated for an *inquisition* in *Spain* as for *exclusion* from *civil trust* in *England*; for it stands upon this foundation, That the *church* is the *state*, or so *essential* a part of it, that *one* cannot be changed without *the other*; which is false. For if it should ever be the general opinion of the *people*, that *the church ought to be changed* (and the *majority* of both houses think so) then *it ought to be changed*.

A genuine

*A genuine Copy of the Resolutions of the Dissenters at
Thame, the 1st Day of November, 1732.*

AT a numerous meeting of gentlemen and ministers of
the counties of Oxon and Bucks, assembled this day
at Thame, in the county of Oxon,

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Visc. *Barrington*, Chairman,

It was Resolved, nem. con.

I. That it is the opinion of this meeting, that the repeal
of the corporation and test acts will greatly conduce to the
honour of religion, to the security of the government in
his majesty's royal person and family, to the strengthening
of the liberties of the subject in general, and to the increasing
and further corroborating the liberties of protestant dis-
senter in particular, and to the better uniting of protestants
one with another.

II. That the *ensuing* sessions of parliament is in our
apprehension the *most likely* and *proper season* that we can
ever promise ourselves for obtaining the repeal of those acts.

III. That it is the opinion of this meeting, that as
nothing can equally affect the protestant dissenting interest
every where, like to the obtaining or not obtaining these
repeals, so there can be no proper *equivalent* given us instead
of them, and that the accepting *any thing* which may carry
the *appearance* of such *equivalent*, either in the opinion of
the *giver* or *receiver*, must be, at *this time*, of the most
pernicious consequence to the *interest* and *reputation* of
protestant dissenters.

IV. That it is the opinion of this meeting, and that it
is necessary for the protestant dissenters to endeavour to
obtain these repeals, with all unanimity and *vigour*, not
only for the purposes aforesaid, but in order to prevent the
dissenting interest from being generally divided.

V. That in order to obtain the repeal of these acts,
each of us do promote it with the *utmost* of our *power*, by
our *conversation*, *correspondence*, and *influence*; and par-
ticularly,

ticularly, according to our present apprehension, none of us will promise or give a vote at the *next election* for any candidate that shall have refused to *vote* for the repeal of these acts, or shall not give us *proper assurances* to *vote* for the repeal of them whenever it shall be moved, in case such repeal be not moved and obtained in the house of commons before the next election; and that we will *vote for* such as have voted for the repeal of these acts, and *we have reason* to think *continue* in the same opinion, or shall give us *proper assurance* to vote for them; and that we will take all *proper occasions* to let it be immediately *known* that *this* is our *resolution*.

VI. That the Right Honourable *John* Lord Viscount *Barrington*, and *Benjamin Burroughs*, Esq. be desired to attend the meeting of gentlemen in *London* on the 9th instant, and every other meeting of dissenters relating to those repeals, and to represent *this* to be our sense in this affair, and to acquaint them, that they are ready to come into any measures that *they* shall think fit and proper to attain so desirable an end; and to desire them, in the most earnest manner, to concur with them therein.

VII. That the several boroughs of these two counties where there are dissenters, do in their *own names*, and in the names of *any other* that will *join* with them in their neighbourhood, prepare and sign petitions to the house of commons, for the repeal of these acts, and lodge them with the Right Honourable *John* Lord Viscount *Barrington* and *Benjamin Burroughs*, Esq. or one of them, till they see a proper opportunity to deliver the said petitions to the representative of each borough, or to other members, to be presented to the house of commons, in concert with others that shall have the like petitions lodged with them.

Subscribed, in the name and appointment of their meeting,

JACOB DELL, *Scribe.*

*A Copy of the Resolutions agreed upon at a Meeting of
Dissenters, at Devizes, in Wiltshire*.*

Devizes, September 14, 1789.

AT a very numerous and respectable Meeting of the Delegates, and others, from the several congregations of Protestant Dissenters in the county of Wilts, held this day, agreeably to public advertisement, at the Bear inn, in this town,

B. HOBHOUSE, Esq. in the Chair.

To take into consideration the propriety of co-operating with the Committees in London, Bristol, and other places, for the purpose of effecting the repeal of the laws which impose the sacramental test as a qualification for civil offices;

It was resolved unanimously,

I. That, as Protestant Dissenters, we entertain no principles which are inconsistent with the welfare of the present government, our attachment to which has not been exceeded by any description of men whatever, as was honourably attested in the late debates on this business in the House of Commons even by our warmest opponents.

II. That we conceive it therefore a manifest injustice to be incapacitated from holding offices of trust, honour, and emolument, unless we comply with the requisite of those laws; and that more especially, as no religious test is required for holding the offices either of Scotland or Ireland.

III. That, as Englishmen, we feel for the disgrace which those laws bring upon the national character for liberty,

* We have printed *these Resolutions* not out of any particular preference that we give to them above others that have been framed in other parts of the kingdom; but because they have been the occasion of *two Letters* on the subject, commonly ascribed to the Bishop of Salisbury, of which it is proposed to take some notice in the next Number of these small pieces.

good sense, and humanity; by unjustly stigmatizing a numerous body of well-deserving men, and depriving them of their rights and privileges; by imposing this test upon the execution of some offices, and not requiring it in others, without any reasonable ground of distinction; and by affording no additional security to the constitution either civil or ecclesiastical, which they were intended to defend; and lastly, by inflicting on those who fill such offices without taking the sacrament of the Lord's Supper within a limited time, agreeably to the rites of the church of England, a very heavy penalty, and such severe disabilities as ought only to be annexed to the most atrocious crimes.

IV. That, as christians, we lament the existence of laws so dishonourable to religion, and so prejudicial to its interests; by prostituting an institution, which, in the views of its Great Founder, had no other object than the spiritual advantage of mankind; and thus tending to destroy the reverence due to the sacred ordinances of the gospel.

V. That actuated therefore by principles of justice towards ourselves, a regard for the national character, and a concern for the purity of a christian institution, we are ready to concur in every wise and constitutional measure for the repeal of such oppressive, dishonourable, and pernicious statutes.

VI. That we heartily approve the measures already adopted by the London Committee to obtain their repeal; and whilst we return them our warmest acknowledgments, we earnestly exhort and call upon them to spare no pains, to be discouraged by no repulses, but to persevere in the use of all lawful methods, until the voice of truth be heard, and our just and reasonable demands be granted.

VII. That we cannot forbear to express our thanks to the Bristol Committee, for requesting our correspondence with them upon all the future steps which may be deemed necessary in the prosecution of this business; and beg leave to assure them, that we shall be ever willing to confer with them upon all points which relate to the general interest of the Protestant Dissenters.

VIII. That the thanks of this meeting be given to Henry Beaufoy, Esq. who introduced, and to Sir Henry Houghton,

Houghton, Bart. who seconded the motion for the restoration of our civil rights, to the Right Hon. Charles James Fox, William Smith, Esq. the Right Hon. Lord Viscount Maitland, (now Earl of Lauderdale) the Right Hon. the Earl Wycombe, the Right Hon. Isaac Barre, Joseph Jekyll, Esq. and all the other members who bore honourable testimony to the justice of our claims.

IX. That we are determined on our parts, and recommend it most earnestly to all our brethren, to shew a particular and marked attention at the ensuing general election to the interest of such candidates as are well affected to the cause of civil and religious liberty.

X. That these resolutions be printed in the Salisbury, Bath, and Sherborne news-papers, and in the London Chronicle, and General Evening Post.

XI. That the thanks of this meeting be given to the Chairman for his compliance with their unanimous request in taking the chair, and for every part of his conduct on this day.

Signed by order of the meeting,

B. HOBHOUSE.

Just published, Price Sixpence,

At the Request of the Committee of the seven Congregations of the three Denominations of Protestant Dissenters, in Birmingham,

The Conduct to be observed by Dissenters in order to procure the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts,

RECOMMENDED IN

A S E R M O N,

Preached before the Congregations of the Old and New Meetings, at Birmingham, November 5, 1789.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L.L.D. F.R.S.

